

Conclusions and Audit Opinion

Conclusions and Audit Opinion for Local Authority Shellfish Traceability Audit Summary Report (England) - July 2025

Based on the findings from the sample of LAs assessed, the system for the delivery of official controls in relation to shellfish traceability and in particular the issuing and monitoring of SRDs has been given a **moderate opinion** (see Annex E). All the SRDs issued by the LAs in the programme could be traced to point where ID marks were required. Suitable ID marks had been applied in all cases.

LAs were able to evidence effective liaison with other key stakeholders such as the various regional Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities (IFCAs), Marine Management Organisation (MMO), local harbour masters, and other neighbouring LAs through the National and regional shellfish liaison groups.

These organisations all have different roles, responsibilities and powers in relation to shellfish harvesting. Continuing liaison is essential in maintaining and developing intelligence networks in relation to shellfish traceability. In the auditors' opinion, the traceability system could be strengthened through:

- improved LA service planning and service reviews, including better estimates of the resources needed to deliver controls including the issuing and monitoring of SRDs
- authorities improving the resilience of their service in relation to the delivery of shellfish controls, possibly through training and developing officers in this area of controls - most of the services audited were highly dependent upon a small number of very experienced officers to deliver specialist shellfish controls, including SRDs - this poses a potential threat to the delivery of these controls in the event of experienced staff retiring or otherwise leaving the profession
- greater focus on the checking of SRDs and shellfish ID marks during any relevant routine food safety interventions, to help to provide assurance on the safety and origins of any shellfish found for sale
- more qualitative internal monitoring of SRDs to ensure they are accurately completed and returned

The sharing of this report with all LAs and the improvements identified, along with any changes made by the FSA in response to the observations made at Annex B, should enhance the consistency and effectiveness of the official controls being delivered by these LAs and the wider enforcement community.